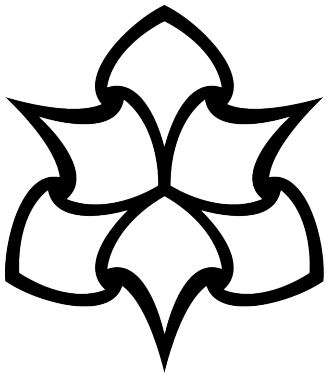

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TESOL teachers' engagement with the native speaker model: How does teacher education impact on their beliefs?

Abstract

This research investigates non-native English teachers' engagement with the native speaker model, i.e. whether they agree/disagree with measuring English teaching and learning performance against native speaker standards. More importantly, it aims to unearth the impact of teacher education on teachers' attitudes and beliefs about native-speakerness. Data were gathered from an online survey delivered to 85 Vietnamese TESOL teachers who had completed one of 19 master's level TESOL programs offered overseas and in Vietnam, followed by in-depth interviews with 20 participants. Results revealed that teacher education strengthened the teachers' beliefs about the linguistic diversity of English and led them to question the native and non-native divide by providing relevant input and opportunities to engage in critical discussion on nativeness, as well as fruitful learning experience. However, language proficiency remains an area where native-speakerness still dominates, and where teacher education did not exert much influence. These findings shed light on the role of TESOL teacher training in influencing teacher beliefs about the native speaker model, and suggest that teacher education programs dedicate more space for teachers to critically explore the construct of language teacher proficiency.

Key words: non-native English teachers, the native speaker model, second language teacher education, language teacher proficiency, Vietnam

Introduction

In the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), engagement with the native speaker model, wherein support is given to measuring English teaching and learning performance against native speaker standards, is quite prevalent among students, teachers, and the general public (see Doan, 2014; Llurda, 2012; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Mahboob, 2010; Matsuda, 2012). Previous research investigating non-native English teachers' beliefs about the native-speaker model have revealed that these teachers were inclined to identify with the native-speakerness ideology in several aspects, ranging from English varieties and language proficiency to the teaching of culture and the choice of teaching methods (e.g., Ahn, 2014; Jenkins, 2005, 2007; Matsuda and Friedrich, 2011; Timmis, 2002; Ton and Pham, 2010). Two common factors reported to influence their attitudes are i) deep-rooted social ideologies in which greater value is attached to native speaker competence (Jenkins, 2005; Matsuda, 2012), and ii) teachers' negative self-perception about being non-native, often derived from their personal experience in learning and using English (Dogankay-Aktuna, 2006; Medgyes, 1983; Jenkins, 2005; Reves and Medgyes, 1994). Meanwhile, it remains little known as to what role TESOL teacher education plays in impacting on teachers' attitudes toward native-speakerness. A teacher training program is often considered an environment where teachers experience teaching "within a framework of studenting" (Richardson, 2003, p. 5), and is likely to form and/or modify their teaching beliefs (see Borg, 2011; Freeman, 1996). Therefore, in suggesting a framework for contesting against the native/non-native divide in TESOL, Kumaravadivelu (2016) points to teacher education as an important factor that helps to enable teachers to become active change agents in the field. For this reason, it would be worthwhile to examine

whether contemporary TESOL teacher training is able to influence their non-native participants' beliefs about native-speakerness and empower them to question the native speaker model.

Literature review

The native speaker in ELT

The preference toward native-speakerness is reflected in a phenomenon that Holiday (2006) termed *native-speakerism*. It denotes a common belief that native speakers "represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (Holliday, 2006:385). This definition briefly summarises the realities of English teaching and learning in places where English is not the mother tongue. Particularly, in these contexts native-speaker Englishes (e.g. British or American English) are often the preferred varieties to be taught and learnt (Ahn, 2014; Ton and Pham, 2010); native-speaker proficiency is targeted (Park, 2012); native English teachers might be better valued than non-native teachers based mainly on their linguistic advantage (Llurda, 2005); Anglophone cultures are more frequently represented and taught than cultures of other parts of the world (Song, 2013; Yuen, 2011); and Anglo-centric teaching methods are often readily adopted (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Taken together, these realities typically represent key aspects of the native speaker model in ELT.

The case against the native speaker model

One of the first arguments put forward to challenge native-speakerism is the lack of evidence showing differences in language competence between first and second language speakers of English (Paikeday, 1985a). For native-speakership to be accepted on scientific grounds, Paikeday argued that there should be a test on language competence randomly administered to people from many different parts of the English-speaking world who claimed that English is their mother tongue or first language. If the test results showed that these people's linguistic

competence was categorically different from those who speak English as a second or foreign language, native-speakerness would be better verified. In an absence of such evidence, Paikeday called for abandoning the distinction between native speakers and foreign learners, stating that "learners of any variety of English include all of us" (Paikeday, 1985b, p. 392). *Native speaker*, therefore, does not mean anything more than 'competent user' of a language.

Second, a reliance on native speaker standards is rendered problematic as a result of the linguistic and pragmatic variation of English usage. Even in varieties commonly considered native Englishes, there are a lot of variations, and not all native speaker varieties of English are equally and mutually intelligible (Kirkpatrick, 2007, 2014). A native speaker of British English might have difficulty understanding a native speaker of Australian English if s/he is not familiar with the Australian variety. This might happen even within a country, for example, between people from the north and south of England (Kirkpatrick, 2007). In these cases, native speaker Englishes do not seem to have any particular advantage over other English varieties with regard to intelligibility.

Third, that there is a much larger population of second or foreign English speakers than L1 English speakers suggests that the native speaker model is no longer appropriate nor should it be desired. Since most of the world's English users would be communicating with non-native speakers rather than native English speakers, holding native speaker norms as standards for their communication is far from relevant (Seidlhofer, 2000). As it is unreasonable to measure one group against the norm of another (Labov, 1969, as cited in Cook, 1999), it would seem inappropriate to require non-native speakers of English to conform to the norms of an idealised group of native speakers that they do not belong to.

A final important argument against the native speaker model is the detrimental effects it might have on L2 English learners and teachers. Focusing on the native speaker might lead L2 learners to see themselves as "failed native speakers" (Cook, 1999:185) with many

deficiencies in language use. This lack of a positive self-image might result in feelings of inferiority and demotivation, and eventually interfere with learners' language performance. In addition, Holliday (2006) observes that native-speakerism does not just impact on non-native speakers on the basis of language representation, but also in terms of culture. He discusses the negative labels often associated with non-native speakers' cultures, such as 'dependent', 'hierarchical', 'collectivist', 'passive', among others. Although these images are more imagined and stereotypical than true, that they appear frequently in ELT literature and professional activities (Holliday, 2005) adds negativity to being non-native, while elevating the status of the native speaker.

Teacher attitudes toward the native speaker model

The above-discussed viewpoints against the native speaker model have been reflected in research attempts that document less restricted views of non-native English teachers toward native-speakerness. Korean and Vietnamese teachers of English have demonstrated their appreciation of their own English variety and awareness of other non-native varieties of English (Ahn, 2014; Shim, 2002; Ton and Pham, 2010). Additionally, non-native English teachers have been found to consider their experience in learning English as a second language a special advantage (Llurda and Hurguet, 2003), and see non-nativeness as different rather than deficient (Phan, 2008). While this existing research showed non-native teachers' positive deviation from different aspects of the native speaker model, it did not look specifically into the role of teacher education in influencing teachers' attitudes.

The two identifiable projects that revealed the impact of teacher education on non-native teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward nativeness are Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) and Park (2012). Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) reported on the results of a 10-week graduate seminar offered specifically for non-native teachers of English in a US TESOL program. The seminar made use of critical praxis activities such as writing professional

autobiographies, and reading and responding to a non-native scholar's writing on the native speaker teacher. These activities were found to raise teachers' awareness of the native/non-native dichotomy, thereby empowering them to perceive themselves as legitimate TESOL professionals. In the same vein, Park's (2012) research highlighted the impact that a student teaching practicum which was part of a TESOL program in North America had on a non-native teacher's self-perception. Being under the supervision of a supportive non-native ESOL teacher who worked hard to establish her credibility, this participant found that her previous doubts about her English language identity were gradually dispelled. She thus gained more confidence in being a non-native English teacher. These studies make important contributions as they demonstrate the capability of teacher education to encourage non-native teachers to adopt a critical stance toward nativeness, and enhance their professional self-esteem through involvement in course activities and teaching practicums. However, they predominantly focused on documenting the reality of individual teacher education programs. A lot remains unknown about the degree to which general TESOL programs affect their participants' views about different aspects of the native speaker model. Further research in this direction will thus add useful empirical evidence to shed light on whether TESOL teacher education has helped to critique the nativeness dichotomy and empower non-native teachers.

Research purpose

This study takes the perspectives of English as an International Language (EIL) and World Englishes (WEs), which advocate against the dominance of native-speakerism (D'Angelo, 2012; Holliday, 2006), acknowledge the global spread and changing status of English (Jenkins, 2013; Seidlhofer, 2011), accept that English exists in different varieties, and attach importance to non-native varieties that have developed across different regions of the world and carry the cultural and pragmatic characteristics of their speakers (Kirkpatrick, 2007). It sets out to answer two questions:

1. To what extent do Vietnamese TESOL teachers who have undertaken master's level training in TESOL engage with the native speaker model?

2. How does teacher education impact on their beliefs about the native speaker model?

Three aspects of the native speaker model under investigation are i) teachers' attitudes toward different English varieties; ii) whether the teachers place emphasis on having native-like language proficiency, i.e. the ability to use the target language that is indistinguishable from the general language competence of a native speaker (see Cook, 1999; Davies, 2003, 2008 for detailed descriptions); iii) their view about the status of non-native teachers vis-à-vis native ones, i.e. whether they think native speakers are ideal English teachers.

Methodology

Research design

This study is part of a larger project examining the impact of teacher education on the thinking and practice of TESOL teachers. It adopted the Sequential Explanatory mixed-methods design, which uses qualitative data to explain initial quantitative results (see Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

Participants and settings

Eighty-five Vietnamese TESOL teachers (64 females and 21 males) took part in the research, with 45 teachers attending 15 master's level TESOL programs in Australia, New Zealand, the US, and the UK (*overseas programs*), and 40 teachers participating in 4 joint programs offered by Australian institutions in partnership with a Vietnamese institution in Vietnam (*localised programs*). These programs were chosen as the larger research was situated in the context of TESOL becoming a globalised field, partly demonstrated in the mobility of teachers and teacher training programs. The teachers underwent training at different times; the most recent participant finished their program in 2014, and the earliest in 1996. At the time of data

collection, all had returned to teach in their home institutions. Seventy were full-time lecturers at 16 public and private universities across Vietnam, and 15 were working at either K-12 English-medium international schools, or private English language institutions. Their ages ranged from 26 to 57 (*M*=35; *SD*=8.1); their teaching experience ranged from 3 to 33 years (*M*=12; *SD*=7.5).

Data collection instruments and procedure

An online questionnaire and semi-structured in-depth interviews were used for data collection. The full questionnaire consisted of six statements exploring teachers' beliefs about different issues related to teaching EIL. For the purpose of this paper, three items inquiring about three aspects of the native speaker model were chosen for analysis. These statements were: *i) Native speakers are ideal English teachers; ii) It is important for English teachers to have an understanding and appreciation of both native and non-native varieties of English; iii) English teachers should have native-like English proficiency*. The teachers were asked to indicate their opinion on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire was distributed online through a university-based webpage to 85 participants using a snowball sampling technique (see Dörnyei, 2007).

Following initial analysis of the quantitative data, individual semi-structured interviews were carried out in Vietnamese with 10 participants from each program type. Each interview lasted from 45-60 minutes and aimed to i) elicit reasons underlying the teachers' viewpoints about the three above-specified aspects of the native speaker model, and ii) explore the extent to which teacher education impacted on their view (see Appendix 1 for an interview schedule). In this report, number pseudonyms (e.g., Teachers 1-10) are used to refer to teachers attending overseas programs, while those participating in localised programs are given letter pseudonyms (e.g., Teachers A-J).

Data analysis

The questionnaire results were submitted to SPSS 22.0 for statistical analysis. As the research aimed to examine the participants' level of engagement with the native speaker model, responses for statement 2, which shows support for the linguistic diversity of English, underwent a reverse-scoring procedure. After that, basic statistics were conducted to obtain the teachers' percentage of agreement toward each of the items**.**

The interviews were transcribed and coded according to three levels of qualitative content analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Dörnyei, 2007). The whole data set was first read through and segments containing the teachers' explanations of their view toward the native-speaker model were highlighted. Next, initial codes were given to the segments. Existing codes were then examined and grouped into potential themes. Finally, clear names were generated for each theme.

Findings

This research investigated TESOL teachers' engagement with the native speaker model, specifically focusing on the impact of teacher education on their thinking and beliefs about native-speakerness. The following section highlights the key findings.

Teachers' level of engagement with the native speaker model

The survey data revealed that the teachers engaged on a low level with the native speaker model in terms of English varieties and the native and non-native divide. In Figure 1, a high proportion (92.2%) supported the linguistic diversity of English, while only 6.3% of the respondents were against the appreciation of different Englishes. They were also supportive of a non-discriminatory view of themselves and native English-speaking colleagues, as 73.4% disagreed that native speaker teachers were better at teaching English than non-native speakers.

However, regarding whether English teachers should have native-like language proficiency, the teachers were largely divided. 34.4% were accepting of native-likeness, while a relatively similar number were undecided, and a much smaller proportion disagreed. The

teachers appeared to turn away from the native speaker model by adopting a considered attitude toward the changing status of English and engaging quite strongly with the equality campaign for native and non-native professionals. However, they were held back by the desire to have native-like English proficiency.

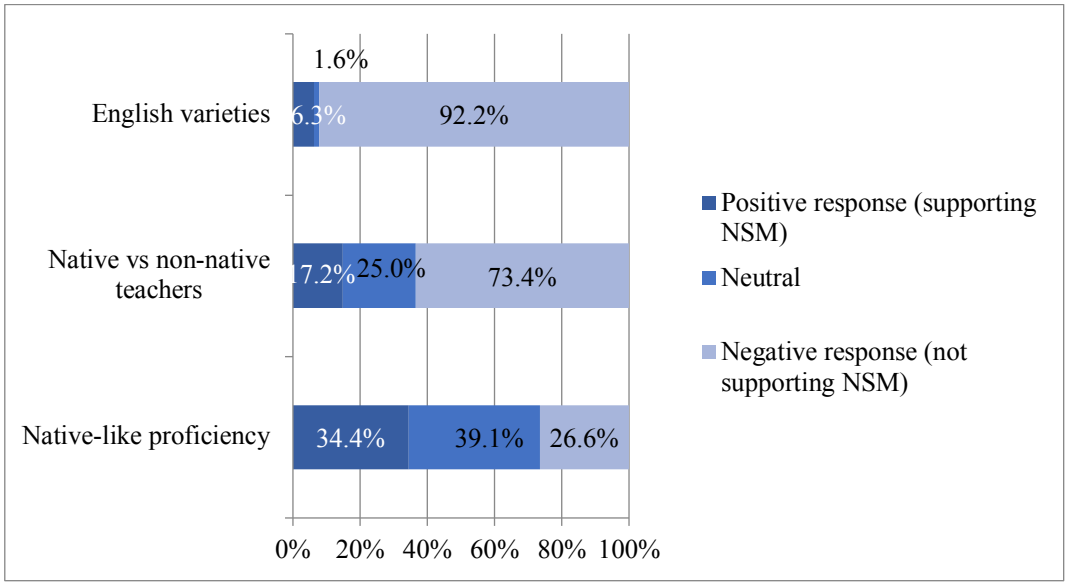

Figure 1. Vietnamese teachers' engagement with the native speaker model (NSM) (*n*=85).

The interview data shed more light on the teachers' thinking and beliefs. First, the interviewees claimed to appreciate different English varieties, whether they are native or non-native. To quote Teacher 4 who attended a TESOL program in the UK, "There is no point in not following an ideological shift that benefits us professionally". Teacher G who attended a localised program also stated, "That only native speaker varieties are legitimate might apply to other languages, but with a language with international influence like English, I don't think it is true".

Similarly, the teachers showed strong support for an equal footing between native and non-native English speaking teachers. They seemed well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of both native and non-native teachers and especially valued their worth as a non-native teacher. Teacher J remarked, "Since we share the first language with students, we have a better understanding of what often causes mistakes in their pronunciation or grammar usage. This

helps us find more suitable solutions to their problems". In the same vein, Teacher 8 realised that native speakers might have an advantage in spoken English, but when it comes to teaching they were as likely to have difficulties in explaining linguistic aspects or selecting an appropriate teaching method as do non-native teachers.

In line with the survey results, the interview responses demonstrated the teachers' inclination toward native-likeness regarding language competence. Teacher 7 emphasised that English teachers should always aim at a higher level of English proficiency, without specifying if this 'higher level' should eventually be native-like. Her reason was because good language proficiency plays an important part in forming the identity of an English teacher. Likewise, Teacher F was constantly influenced by native-likeness, especially with his pronunciation and accent. Teaching at an international school where most of his students learnt English from an early age with native speaker teachers, he had to be extra careful with his English use when teaching his students. "Although their grammar and writing might be less proficient, their pronunciation is almost native-like. I think this puts pressure on me, as I don't want to appear incompetent to my students", he admitted.

The impact of teacher education

The interview findings revealed two main types of impact that teacher training exerted on the teachers' engagement level with the native speaker model, including knowledge development and the learning experience.

Knowledge development. The teacher education programs appeared to provide the teachers with useful knowledge that helped to shape and reshape their views toward the native speaker model. Although none of the programs were designed according to an EIL perspective per se (see Matsuda, 2012 for examples of EIL-informed programs), several EIL issues were incorporated into the content of different courses. This provided the teachers with exposure to readings and research on topics concerning the ownership of English and the values of nativised

English varieties. They therefore became aware and more open-minded toward the pluricentricity of English. Teacher 4, who earlier wanted to adopt an American accent, came to value her own English variety more after learning that there was a large number of scholars who had been supporting a non-discriminatory view toward English usage (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Jenkins, 2007). Similarly, Teacher 6, when acquainted with the discussion against the native/non-native dichotomy, almost immediately engaged with it. She even decided to select it as a topic for a course essay, and was intrigued to find ample strong empirical arguments from research (e.g., Braine, 2010; Medgyes, 1992) to disprove the long-standing belief that native speakers are ideal English teachers.

Three teachers attending localised programs, who used to have no strong opinion of this binary, claimed to give more thought to it as they underwent training. These teachers worked in international schools and universities and had regular and direct professional contact with native speaker teachers. Previously, they did not challenge the work division between themselves and their native colleagues, which was that native teachers taught writing and speaking skills, and Vietnamese teachers were put in charge of grammar and reading lessons. However, learning about the dichotomy empowered them to think more critically about their status. They became more concerned about their role in the workplace in comparison with their native counterparts.

Gaining knowledge of EIL and WE issues during training shifted the teachers' attention away from giving priority to native speaker varieties of English and weakened feelings of inferiority toward native speaker teachers; however, it does not seem to impact much on their view toward their own language proficiency. The teachers were not able to completely disengage with native-speaker norms. For one thing, they were still concerned by the social ideology that an English teacher's competence is best judged by whether or not s/he can reach the native speaker proficiency level (Jenkins, 2005). For another, they could not recall any

instance in which teacher language proficiency was discussed explicitly as a course issue. Teacher 10 said that during training they were encouraged to focus on their strengths as L2 English speakers (e.g., sharing students' first language, having undergone the English learning experience). Nevertheless, language proficiency was not adequately addressed within the scope of teacher training. Teacher I stressed that non-native teachers needed more practical assistance in aspects of everyday teaching related to their language proficiency such as intercultural competence, and pedagogical grammar and pronunciation, to contest against the native/non-native dichotomy.

The learning experience. The actual experience of learning in the teacher education programs also influenced the teachers' attitudes toward the native speaker model. This was demonstrated most clearly among teachers who participated in overseas TESOL programs. As Teacher 6 progressed through her study and life in the US, she realised how much people's uses of English varied and yet they were still able to study and work effectively. First-hand experience of living and studying in an English-speaking environment led this teacher to become familiar with and readily accept different English varieties. To Teacher 8, the interaction with fellow native speaker classmates in the Australian program helped her realise that they also encountered difficulties in the process of learning to teach as did non-native speakers. She recollected, "When we worked together for a group assignment, I could see they [the native speakers] sometimes had problems with understanding course concepts just as I did, and we often solved them through discussions. I think we both have our strengths and limitations". This helped to increase her self-confidence as an English teacher, and solidify her belief in going beyond the language issue and placing more emphasis on the activity of learning to teach itself.

However, there were instances in which the teachers' learning experience in overseas TESOL programs somewhat reinforced the native-speakerist ideology. Teacher 9 recalled that some of his lecturers in the US program usually asked non-native speaker students to proofread

their writing carefully for language problems, or consult tutors at the university's Writing Center, before submitting their assignments. "Why would they "pick on" us non-native speakers? Are we the only ones who have problems with writing? Are all the native speaker students good writers?" This teacher expressed strong emotions as he raised his opinion.

It could be seen that while the knowledge and learning experience in teacher education programs had positive impacts on teacher beliefs about different English varieties and equality between native and non-native teachers, they were still influenced by native speaker standards of language proficiency. The following section will discuss the role of teacher education in disseminating these EIL views among practising teachers, with a focus on language teacher proficiency.

Discussion

Findings of this research showed positive influences of teacher education on teacher beliefs about certain aspects of the native speaker model. First, through engaging course participants in explorations and discussions about the linguistic diversity of English, TESOL training appeared to raise teachers' awareness and appreciation of different English varieties. What the present research contributes is that it was able to trace back the sources of these changing teachers' view to the effect of teacher education, which remains unexplored in previous studies (see Ahn, 2014; Ton and Pham, 2010; Shim, 2002).

Second, the teachers' attitudes toward the native and non-native divide was questioned and revised as a result of teacher education. To begin with, teachers attending overseas programs shifted toward seeing positivity in being non-native due to, first, exposure to course contents that promoted the EIL perspective in which multilingualism instead of native-speakerism is the norm (Canagarajah, 2014, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2010, 2012, 2014). They started

to see beyond the nativeness dichotomy and think more positively about being a non-native professional, knowing they were supported by research in the field (cf. Park, 2012; Samimy and Brutt-griffler, 1999). Also, their experience in living and studying in English-speaking environments provided them with professional contact with native speaker teachers by means of coursework collaboration, enabling them to see more clearly the strengths and weaknesses of these teachers.

As for teachers of localised programs, they were not only able to strengthen their self-confidence, but also had a good grasp of pedagogical content knowledge that they could rely on to support their view (Richardson, 1996). This increased knowledge also led some of the teachers to challenge their teaching realities and demand more professional equality regarding work division between themselves and native speaker colleagues. In this respect, teacher education has arguably succeeded in raising teachers' awareness of power relations in their professional community, empowering them to become critical practitioners (Hawkins and Norton, 2009).

The participants, however, appeared to identify quite strongly with the native speaker model in terms of language proficiency. Their belief about the necessity of native-likeness was supported by the great importance attached to oral proficiency. Such thinking aligns with non-native teachers in Jenkins' (2005:250) study, one of whom claimed that "I should support EIL view as a teacher, but as a person maybe I'm aiming at native-like". Also, it is in agreement with previous research investigating non-native teachers' perception of their own linguistic competence (see Butler, 2007; Jenkins, 2005, 2007; Park, 2012; Pavlenko, 2003), that pronunciation is "the crux of the issue" (Walkinshaw and Duong, 2012:11) as it is an area where many L2 English teachers feel they cannot compete with L1 English speakers who apparently have a linguistic advantage.

The teachers' desire to better their language proficiency to enhance their professional expertise is undoubtedly a positive mentality toward professional development for language teachers (Borg, 2006; Farrell and Richards, 2007; Pennington and Richards, 2015). Nevertheless, in this process of self-improvement they seemed to have fallen back into the 'trap' of the native-speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992) that they previously wanted to escape from. They were still predominantly concerned about the non-native features of their English, especially their pronunciation and accentedness. This viewpoint is arguably counterproductive for two main reasons outlined in turn below.

First, it demonstrates an oversimplified view of the construct of teacher language proficiency. Specifically, it overlooks an important fact that language teachers' proficiency demands more than just general or academic proficiency (Elder and Kim, 2013), and that the distinct classroom discourse makes teachers' use of the target language different from other contexts of language use. Freeman, Katz, Garcia Gomez, and Burns (2015) identify these differences and propose a reconceptualisation of the notion of language teachers' proficiency. This set of proficiency benchmarks goes beyond criteria for assessing general English proficiency to include a wide range of teachers' abilities to use English to conduct lessons, such as managing the classroom, understanding and delivering lesson content, and assessing students and giving feedback. From this standpoint, both native and non-native speaker teachers require a similar level and amount of training and practice to become proficient in the classroom language. The likelihood of the native-speaker factor interfering with teachers' language proficiency therefore seems minimal.

Second, the teachers' preoccupation with features of their spoken English seemed to have overshadowed the importance that should be attached to written English, an area where they are likely to be on a par with native speaker teachers. Kirkpatrick (2014), in proposing a model for a lingua franca approach to ELT, stresses the difference between spoken and written

English, arguing that there is no such notion as a native speaker of written English as writing is a skill that has to be learnt by all. Moreover, the variation of writing structures and styles across genres, disciplines, and cultures means that standard written norms are not dictated by native speakers, but by tradition and convention (Kirkpatrick, 2014). Both native and non-native speakers of English need training to become proficient writers. In fact, Teacher 9 of overseas programs realised this and questioned the myth that all native English speakers are good writers, as he experienced the bias that his lecturers in a US TESOL program had toward non-native participants' writing skills. This potentially empowering realisation, nonetheless, was mainly derived from this teacher's own reaction to his learning reality. Teacher training, instead of forging a more equal professional environment, seemed to have reinforced the native/non-native divide.

For both of these arguments against a simplified view of language teachers' proficiency, both types of teacher education programs attended by the participants of this research showed limitations. They either made little reference to language teacher proficiency, or failed to problematise it to broaden course participants' perception of the concept. It is therefore not surprising that the teachers were not able to completely move away from the native-speaker model when discussing their language proficiency, despite that a majority of them identified with other EIL views such as appreciation of English varieties and equality concerns for native and non-native teachers.

Conclusion: Implications for teacher education

This research reported the extent to which Vietnamese teachers of English who attended overseas and localised TESOL programs engaged with the native-speaker model in three particular aspects: their view toward the linguistic diversity of English, their engagement with the native/non-native divide, and their preference toward native-like proficiency. More importantly, it unearthed the impact of teacher education on the teachers' thinking and beliefs

about these matters. While teacher education positively influenced the teachers' view toward the first two issues by providing them with relevant input, opportunities to engage in critical discussion, and fruitful learning experience, language proficiency remains an area where native-speakerness still dominates.

Despite being conducted with a relatively small sample of Vietnamese teachers of English, this research suggests important implications for teacher education. First, it urges TESOL teacher education programs to continue strengthening emphasis on EIL contents such as teachers' awareness and appreciation of different English varieties and their criticality toward the native and non-native divide, thereby empowering teachers to become more liberated from the native speaker model. Second, this research recommends including critical discussions on teacher language proficiency as part of the learning content of MA TESOL programs. While language proficiency has been an important knowledge component of many pre-service English language teacher education programs (Richards, 1998), it does not seem to receive adequate attention in master's level teacher training courses. To contest against preference toward native-like proficiency, teacher learners should be involved in extended discussions on the complexity of language teacher proficiency. Specifically, they need to be made aware of various factors constituting language teacher proficiency, as specified by Freeman et al. (2015). Emphasis should also be placed on paying equal attention to both oral and written proficiency (Kirkpatrick, 2014). The goal is to make it clear to teachers that both native and non-native English teachers have equal chances at becoming proficient in the target language.

Finally, the present study substantiates Matsuda and Friedrich's (2011) call for a reconstruction of TESOL teacher education, so that there will be more programs based entirely on the EIL and WE perspectives. All the programs attended by teachers of the project were similar to those reported in Matsuda (2009), that they included EIL issues merely as an extra

content of the traditional curriculum, rather than foundational factors influencing all aspects of teaching and learning. This might explain why the participants were able to identify with some EIL issues, but still measured their language proficiency against native-speaker standards. Matsuda and Friedrich (2011) therefore suggest that a complete overhaul in curriculum design is needed for teacher education to exert a lasting and empowering impact on teacher learners, enabling them to readily disengage with the native speaker model in all aspects of English teaching and learning. This change in curriculum would also require teacher educators, particularly those of overseas programs which often enrol both native and non-native English teachers, to be open-minded and fully aware of their teaching practice so that they do not inadvertently widen the gap in power relations between native and non-native participants in their program.

Note

1. The terms 'overseas programs' and 'localised programs' are not universal; they were coined mainly for convenient referral to the teacher education programs.

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Appendix 1

Interview schedule

1. Questions about English varieties

a. What English varieties do you teach your students now?

b. How familiar are you with non-native English varieties? Do you think it is important for English learners to be familiar with those varieties?

c. How did the teacher education program you attended contribute to shaping your views on English varieties?

2. Questions about the native/non-native divide

a. Do you think native speakers are ideal English teachers? Why/Why not?

b. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of native and non-native speaker teachers?

c. How do you think the teacher education program influenced your thinking on this matter? Can you give some examples?

3. Questions about language proficiency

a. Have you ever wished that you were able to use English like a native speaker? Please explain why.

b. How important is language proficiency to an English teacher? Do you think having native-like proficiency will help you teach better?

c. Was there anything you learnt/experienced in the teacher education program that influenced your current view on teacher language proficiency? Can you give an example?